A TALE OF A WALLED TOWN AND OTHER VERSES

BY
B. 8266, ——— PENITENTIARY

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Marian G. Coleman

A TALE OF A WALLED TOWN

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A TALE OF A WALLED TOWN

AND OTHER VERSES

BY

B. 8266, ______ PENITENTIARY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE

PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON
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DEDICATE TO

MRS. JANE H. GATES

(Our " Lady with the Lamp ")

So weary of the long Gethsemane,
We lift sad eyes unto the stars, and cry,
" O Lord, how long? " and none doth make reply.
And there abideth That we might not flee,
Though all the roads of all the world were free
To us again; yet will not mem'ry die
Of all the old-loved faces once were by,
And all that might have been and may not be:
For that our Doubting Castle is most strong;
And ever faithful warder is Despair.
Aye when our nights are darkest, days most long,
Our " Lady with the Lamp " doth enter there,
And we that were but outcast, broken men,
After that passing walk erect again.

89433

THE AUTHOR'S THANKS ARE DUE THE FOLLOWING PERIODICALS FOR THEIR KINDNESS IN ACCEDING TO THE REPRINTING OF VERSES WHICH HAVE APPEARED IN THEIR COLUMNS: LIFE, NEW YORK TIMES, JUDGE, THE POPULAR ENGINEER, THE PUBLIC LEDGER, PHILADELPHIA, THE CATHOLIC STANDARD AND TIMES

INTRODUCTION

Poetry too seldom comes out of the detached experience of the singer. When it does it gains by something which even the most passionate dreams cannot supply. It is when life hurts most that poetry appeals deepest, and a record of what the poet pays is an expression of the greatest human significance. "B. 8266 —— Penitentiary," has paid the price with the songs in this book, about which I want to say a word of the highest commendation. I have no doubt that first his Number, by which his identification is lost to the world and becomes part of a system, and later his name, will be added to that list of "immortal unfortunates" who from Raleigh down through Christopher Smart and Oscar Wilde to the late "Prisoner of Pentonville," have brightened literary history by the expression of their fates in verse. "The Song of David," "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," "A Tale of a Walled Town," however they may vary in method and subject, all spring from the same profound source of human complexity, that has been too profoundly and hurtfully touched with the circumstances of an

ironic world, and the subtle threads of personal destiny. I do not say that "A Tale of a Walled Town" is as great a poem as either of the other two, but I do say, that nothing that I recall, ranks between them and the poem of B. 8266, and that behind the latter is a long descent to any similar accomplishment. This is evidence enough that the author is a figure of extreme importance.

B. 8266 is a long-term prisoner in the Penitentiary of one of the great Eastern States. I want to make clear that he is real, and that these poems are the products of such a man, because the reader may doubt his authenticity after reading this book. I know that he is real because I have seen him and talked with him, and found a man of great personal charm, and with a passion for and knowledge of literature that I have found in the possession of very few individuals. I cannot give his real name, though I know it, and there are some facts about his life I cannot reveal, though the knowledge of them has explained for me a good many things in the poems.

I shall never forget the early March day that I stepped through the door in the sombre granite walls of the prison and saw the yellowish-green stalks of the tulips for the first time this spring glowing from the earth in the prison-yard. They struck me as symbolic of the flower of song that was pushing up from the dark soil of experience

within that huge pile of sombre stone which Society had erected around the lives of those who were spending their days within. I went up to the warden's office to meet the prisoner-poet with the feeling that there was to be found in his spirit a promise not unlike the promise of the tulips I had seen for the first time this spring down in the prison-yard.

When the man came into the warden's office and lost the first shyness of greeting strangers from the world outside, he brought into the place a feeling that came from the vistas of his dreams and visions and not from the cramped and monotonous atmosphere of the narrow prison cells. I found a man who confessed to be reading Wells's "Outline of History" with a gusto and a freedom of discrimination that seemed to me to match Wells's writing of that iconoclastic chronicle of human events and characters. I found the prisoner a man who was a bit of a rebel against literary traditions, and who found the intolerable domination of some of the classical authors difficult to account for. It was delicate, and a bit embarrassing, for me to touch upon almost any subject because I had a notion that the meaning would in some subtle way get around to the personal relation of the man to his position. I didn't mean to have the weight of Society, if I could help it, force any thought or expression to point the accusing finger of either

sympathy or of moral sentiment at his naked penance. I saw only a free spirit through whom the man escaped with me into the unconfined world of beauty and song. There was, I recalled, a note in his poems that had struck me as unusual for one whom circumstances had placed in his position, and this was a general lack of morbid introspection in the poems. I mentioned the fact, and the comment was, I confess, a little startling, for B. 8266 informed me that he was a humorist. God Almighty, I thought, has been cruel to humorists, the men who not only made His sometimes intolerable and tragic world livable for the human beings He put into it, but themselves endured it by virtue of being able to laugh at the ruins it made of His best purposes; and that warden's office was lit by that remark with the spirit of all the great-hearted men who brought salvation to the soul of man with laughter. It was, of course, another way of B. 8266 saying that he was a philosopher, and was looking at life from his hidden corner of it with fortitude and charity. He confessed his favorite authors among the ancient writers were Aristophanes and Ovid, which are, one need scarcely comment, rich storehouses from which to draw the substances of a sane understanding of this muddled world.

On contemporary literature B. 8266 talked with the familiarity and enthusiasm of one who sat in some cosy bookish room rather than in the war-

den's office of a massive State Penitentiary. The man thrilled with literary gossip. As an example of the close contact he keeps behind those forbidding gray walls of his prison, I shall quote from a letter he wrote me shortly after my visit. "So many magazines," he writes, "have lately offered themselves as a forcing-house for youthful genius! I'm strong for 'Opal' and Hilda Conkling, but the Ashfords and Master Wades, well, they'll probably wind up in some literary side-show. I have very often been resentful of the sternness with which my budding genius (!) was repressed in the days of my youth, but perhaps, I've really gained by it. It certainly would be regrettable if Hilda Conkling should suffer from a too early development of her powers. Her three poems in the latest issue of the *Literary Digest* should be proof enough that hers is a very real Pegasus." At present B. 8266 is, he says, "working on a novel, dealing with the woman in politics, which I hope to complete this year."

What of the poetry of this man who one can see is no ordinary individual! I venture to say that it has an importance that cannot be duplicated at present in American literature. There has not been any such searching revelation of a man's soul under the circumstances as is made in the long poem "A Tale of a Walled Town," which opens the book. In this narrative B. 8266 tells the story of a man's life, the pitiful childhood, the rudderless youth, the love that came with man-

hood for the woman who became the evil star of his destiny. For this woman, through his passion for her, the man rifled the costly possessions of others to satisfy her rapacious hunger for luxuries. As he sings,

> I would have heaped her rubies red
> As any heart's blood ever shed;
> Pearls would make a Thaïs dead;
> Made diamonds fall
>
> In costlier rain than Danaë knew
> On head and hands and bosom, too;
> To sparkle there like morning dew,
> On lilies tall.

Apprehended for his thefts he was sent to prison for seven years, and on being released returned to find his wife another man's mistress. Then it was, the poem relates, he committed the deed for which he is now paying the penalty. No one can read this poem without feeling its deep sincerity, its utter and humble penitence, its passion, its intense and vibrant sense of human tragedy. The poet employs an effective reiteration of the words "Toll slowly," which never permits one to escape from the background and atmosphere out of which the narrative pieces itself together from the veiled memories of the past. It is as much a "tale" of a "walled town," as it is the inquisition of a man's conscience, which has passed through

the fire of pain and shame and come out so tempered as to look truth unflinchingly in the face with its secrets. Whatever a man has done for which he may or may not deserve the punishment that Society inflicts, it is a kind of martyrdom of the spirit for one to sing in spite of the oppressiveness that is contained in the description of the prison:

Ours is a grimy bit of blue;
  And very small;
And sunbeams scarce adventure to
  O'ertop the wall.

A bird that flutters swiftly by;
A wind that passes with a sigh;
A cloudlet sailing slow and high;
  And that is all.

O matins, and O vesper bells,
    Toll slowly!
A city of a thousand cells—
A thousand individual hells.

And can there be anything more illuminating and at the same time more pathetic than the wistful declaration of the following:

They know but little of desire
  Who know no wall;
But we who sit by no hearth-fire
  Do know it all—

The fierce desire to see and know
Home faces and the home-fire's glow;
All that we let so lightly go,
    And would recall.

I can say with the heartiest conviction that this poem of and from a "walled town" deserves to be famous, and famous not alone because it is a felicitously sung story of a man's shadowed life, but also because it chants the aspirations of all those maimed and broken inhabitants of the "walled town." With particular satisfaction for the essential soundness and humane disposition of this unusual prisoner one should note this fact: The poet and the prophet in him were already alive and stirring before a violation of the law had taken away his freedom. The poem closes on an impressive note of hope and righteousness:

O better far that death should be
Of every crime the penalty,
Than such creation should go free
    At any time.

Sly devils clothed in human flesh;
            Toll slowly!
Whose revellings in midnight's hush
Might make Abaddon's self to blush.

Upon a wheel of solitude
Are men bound of defiant mood,
And broken; and they call it good,
    That fear doth fall

Upon them; and no more again,
They stand among their fellow-men,
Straight-kneed, and level-eyed, as when
    They passed the wall.

What agency of theirs can make
                    Toll slowly!
Anew that thing they idly break
Upon a wheel for order's sake?
May God forgive them the mistake!

O would that it were but a dream,
    Bred of the night!
To waken in the morning gleam,
    And see the light

On faces that we loved and knew;
To hear a lark sing in the blue,
Or bustle of the avenue—
    God, and we might!

might." The use of the plural pronoun is significant of the broad sympathy with humanity out of which this very poignant poem develops along with its personal moods and recitals.

The miscellaneous poems that follow show an unusual variety of interests, which, after all, is not so surprising when one stops to note that B. 8266 is not a " prisoner " whom the dreary confinement of a cell has forced to discover a way of escape for the mind and spirit in the expression of verse, but a " poet " whose body, circumstance has converted into a " prisoner " while his imagination and dreams—uncapturable elements—explore mysteries and the experience of life and the world with triumphant freedom. Thus can one account for the many songs and lyrics that bring to one such a vivid sense of common moods: the delights in nature, the ideal of friendship, the tributes that express so keenly and wistfully the gratitude for kindliness and sympathy, the excellent and speaking description of scenes and places that embody memories and recall associations, and those little pictures of war and noble sentiments of patriotism, which so often with felicitous music and grace of image sing in these pages. Indeed, Lovelace's immortal declaration that

> Stone walls do not a prison make,
> Nor iron bars a cage—

is eloquently applicable to this "modern prisoner" who has written so joyously of the life and nature which through silent and lonely years have been as distant to him as the other side of eternity.

In our generation B. 8266 has written the best poem on the American flag in " Flag Day—1920." Certainly no sincerer tribute (threaded with a pure vein of personal regret for not being able to serve one's country), to a fallen hero in the war, is to be found than in the stanzas "To Captain David Fallon, M. C., Anzac, March 10, 1918. Nor can one find the rugged picturesqueness of rock and wave at Cape Ann gilded with the sudden glory of the rising sun, so arrestingly and compactly painted as in the sonnet "Morning at Cape Ann." The pure, soft tones, the witchery of the dusk in "Nocturne," which I quote, should make many a famous poet envious of the power of enchantment in one who must dream of the fields at dusk from the lonely and empty solitude of a prison-cell:

Golden the firefly's spark, half-quenched in dew;
Golden the stream of stars flows through the blue;
Plaintive the nightjar's call, wailing its mate;
O Philomela, and wherefore do you wait?
Milk-white your shoulders, dear; whiter your breast;
On such silken pillow a king's head might rest.
Sleep, then, all odorous of myrrh and musk,
My Rose of all the world, the dusk, the dusk!

William Stanley Braithwaite

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A TALE OF A WALLED TOWN

PROLOGUE

Ours is a grimy bit of blue;
  And very small;
And sunbeams scarce adventure to
  O'ertop the wall.
A bird that flutters swiftly by;
A wind that passes with a sigh;
A cloudlet sailing slow and high;
  And that is all.

O matins, and O vesper bells,
            Toll slowly!
A city of a thousand cells—
A thousand individual hells.

Their walls of stone and bars of steel,
So cold to see and cold to feel,
They make the warmest heart congeal,
  Like to the wall.

And therein walk the living dead,
Their hands so deeply dyed in red,
That even hope from them has fled,
  Beyond recall.

And when the midnight wraps it round,
Toll slowly!
What grisly shapes stalk up and down
The passages of that walled town!

A dreadful shape, with lolling head;
A ghastly shape, all drenched in red;
A loathly shape, but lately dead,
And ''scaped it's pall.

They pace adown the darkling halls,
And beat against th' unyielding walls,
And stand where still the trap-door falls
On gallows tall.

Then wonder not that sleepers wake;
Toll slowly!
And in the chill dark sweat and quake,
To hear a door or wicket shake.

Never a soul here sped hath gone
To Heaven, or Hell, but lingers on,
Incarcerate, till Judgment-dawn
Shall top the wall.

They may not win to upper air,
Because of weight of guilt they bear;
And they are doomed to linger there,
Within the wall;

And see new dweller in their place;
Toll slowly!
And newer still, until God's face
Be turned to them in wrath, or grace.

They know but little of desire
Who know no wall;
But we who sit by no hearth-fire
Do know it all—
The fierce desire to see and know
Home faces and the home-fire's glow;
All that we let so lightly go,
And would recall.

CANTO THE FIRST

It matters not what thing I did:
Toll slowly!
I deemed the thing was safely hid,
And dared to walk the throng amid.

Justice of men is sure to smite—
Jaws of a trap that sudden bite.
I walk no more in the sunlight
Without the wall.

And seven bars there are that lie,
Across my little square of sky;
And seem to bar e'en God on high,
From out the wall.

And seven bars there are that keep
Toll slowly!
Me safe in waking and in sleep;
And if I curse, and if I weep.

And never minute goes unseen;
And never hour that has not been
All that the twenty-four might mean,
Without the wall.

And never day drags slowly by,
But that I see a century die,
And am most sad it is not I
Beneath the pall.

And never night that does not bide,
Toll slowly!
Until methinks that time has died,
And with it all the world beside.

And I, within a whitewashed room,
That's now become a living tomb,
Must lie forgot till crack-of-doom
Shall end it all.

And lying so, last night I heard
That some dread thing a-near me stirred,
Like to the flutter of a bird
That would not fall.

Perhaps asleep, perhaps awake,
Toll slowly!
I lay, in ev'ry limb a-quake,
The while a thin, dead voice spake:

CANTO THE SECOND

" Seven long years I dwelt herein,
Toll slowly!
To expiate a crimson sin,
And never did to freedom win.

Give ear unto a tale I tell,
That suits both place and hour well;
And hearing which, all imps of hell
Do make good cheer.

I knew no mother's face; nor knew
The mother love that was my due;
Yet dreamed of such the long years through—
And never did the dream come true,
I held so dear.

My father took—like fox—to earth;
Toll slowly!
And it was cause for ribald mirth,
That I knew neither home nor hearth.

There seemed no place for such as I—
There seldom is, beneath God's sky,
'Twere better far such fruit should lie
  Behind a wall.

Where hard-faced women tended me,
In paid and thankless ministry;
And vain it was to them to flee
  For aught at all.

I saw beyond the bars, and knew
          Toll slowly!
That one might laugh there, and play, too:
Nor yet go walking two-and-two.

Yet was I sheltered, clothed, and fed;
And o'er me endless prayers were said,
By cold-eyed ministers, who shed
  Their fear on all.

A sparrow once a-near me lit;
One told me that God cared for it;
I wondered did He care one whit
  And I should fall.

I had no name—and nameless all
          Toll slowly!
Alike were those behind that wall,
Who looked out at a steeple tall.
(I wonder that it did not fall.)

The childless couples came to see
Toll slowly!
And pick and choose of such as we;
And I was glad that one chose me.

I deemed that I had found the love
I craved all other things above;
And I was happy, and I strove,
To please them all.

They held me neither son, nor guest,
Nor hired servant—such have rest—
But I, who gave them of my best,
They held their thrall.

They took me for their household drudge,
Toll slowly!
To fetch and carry—let God judge,
I have no art to hold the grudge.

I ate the bits of broken meat;
I ever had the lowest seat;
I found no rest for weary feet;
No love at all.

One morning, ere the stars were set,
While all the grass with dew was wet,
I fled them—and I owe no debt
To them at all.

They came no more into my ken;
Toll slowly!
And in my disillusion then,
I turned me from the haunts of men.

Long years I wandered up and down;
I wandered all the world around;
In ceaseless travel sought to drown
The wild heart's call.

But vain it was; and then I thought
To win by toiling that I sought;
And long and lustily I wrought;
Grown strong and tall.

I held no task too mean to do,
Toll slowly!
And full delight of labor knew;
And had men's praise in fullest due.

CANTO THE FOURTH

And then Love came; and in that hour,
Toll slowly!
I sensed the beauty of the flower;
The glory of the Springtime's dower.

My starved heart burgeoned as the trees
Bring forth their buds on April's knees;
Impregnate all, as Auster breathes
Across the snow.

As Adam looking on the sun;
Prometheus, his anguish done;
Andromeda, Perseus come,
  In morning's glow—

As Balboa when, from mountain peak,
                    Toll slowly!
He saw the dawn paint ruddy streak
Across Pacific; as the Greek,

Whose cry "Thalassa!" from the mound
To all his comrades far around,
Announced the long endeavor crowned
  And triumphal—

As Gregory, in castled state,
And Henry, suppliant at his gate—
So felt I when I knew my mate
  Had heard my call.

O lovelier than tongue can tell!
                    Toll slowly!
Like royal robes about her fell
The silken stuffs she loved so well.

I mind me not her follies now,
Remembering the sweet, white brow;
The ruddy gold above, and how
  A curl let fall

Upon her neck's white column, burned
Against its snow, as though there turned
To purer gold than that of learned
  Alchemists all.

For her I would have scaled all heights;
                    Toll slowly!
Toiled upward all my days and nights;
Eschewed not Icarean flights.

CANTO THE FIFTH

No course of true love e'er runs smooth;
                    Toll slowly!
'Tis but the false is shorn of ruth:
An old wive's tale that cannot soothe.

They laughed my lover's plea to scorn;
They said that I was basely born;
That "blood will out"—on some far morn,
  Woe would befall.

I might not look upon her face;
I might no tender message trace;
I might not enter in that place
  That held my all.

Think you I was content with this?
                    Toll slowly!
When I had tasted, forego bliss,
Remembering that one first kiss?

I sought my love through all the day;
I sought her in each 'customed way;
I found her in the evening's gray,
  Where lindens tall

Dropt creamy blossoms down the swale;
And told her all my lover's tale;
And waited then her verdict, pale,
  And trembling all.

Her answer was that I had guessed;
Toll slowly!
She laid her head upon my breast—
And that kiss I remember best!

A warm midnight; a gibbous moon,
Half-hid in scud; a whistled tune,
'Neath casement ope; a lover's rune,
  The sum of all.

A swift flight through the purple dark;
Past pools of moonlight, white and stark;
And no sound but a watch-dog's bark,
  A night-bird's call.

Ere yet the summer night had died,
Toll slowly!
Ere yet the clarion cock had cried,
The hymeneal knot was tied.
(What dearer than a stolen bride?)

What orisons to Love we said
Toll slowly!
In that first year that we were wed,
Nor guessed how quickly he'd be fled!

Had I been lord of wealth untold,
I would have clad in cloth-of-gold,
Picked out with jewels manifold,
My peerless one.

I would have lifted to the skies
Gardens surpassing Paradise;
And holding all that beauties prize,
Beneath the sun.

And there would sing for her delight,
Toll slowly!
The bulbul all the day and night;
And lark, and veery's strain unite,
In hymn would charm an eremite.

And there I'd shaped a faery grot',
In chrysoprase and beryl wrought;
And thick with spinels overshot,
As stars let fall.

Slow-footed, pacing in and out,
I'd wove me then such charm about
That garden as had kept without
Life's sorrows all.

And held therein all things of joy;
Toll slowly!
A love so bold and yet so coy,
As not eternity would cloy.

I would have heaped her rubies red
As any heart's blood ever shed;
Pearls would wake a Thais dead;
Made diamonds fall

In costlier rain than Danae knew,
On head and hands and bosom, too;
To sparkle there like morning dew,
On lilies tall.

I think she loved me all the while.
Toll slowly!
She was a spoiled and petted child,
On whom all folk conspired to smile.

CANTO THE SEVENTH

I clothed a butterfly in grey,
And thought to tame it to my way,
Who had not learned to dance and play.
Toll slowly!

Nor cared for any vain parade
Of fools in peacock plumes arrayed;
Or any mimic art displayed:
She loved them all.

I read the longing in her eyes,
And in the night I heard her sighs,
And vowed to give her that she'd prize,
Whate'er befall.

I rose up from my loved one's side
Toll slowly!
One midnight; e'er the cock had cried,
I'd spoiled me that rich countryside.

That day I gave her minted gold;
And jewels—all her hands might hold—
And gorgeous stuffs, and laces old,
For her delight.

She asked not whence, or how they came;
She but consumed them as a flame,
And heaped caresses, till the shame
Had taken flight.

That soul remembering too well,
Toll slowly!
The sunward height from whence it fell,
Is salted with all fires of hell.

They took me: on a summer's morn,
They took me, bound me, I was borne;
Chivied, raged at, 'whelmed with scorn,
To tribunal.

O smug judge, voicing your regret,
I had incurred too heavy debt
For mercy; was it then well met
  With seven years?

There are no Daniels left to-day;
              Toll slowly!
But cold machines, who spare or slay,
According as the statutes say.

CANTO THE EIGHTH

They might have conquered, had they spared;
              Toll slowly!
I would have known then that they cared,
And all my soul to them had bared.

Still doth the ancient law, forsooth,
Claim eye for eye, and tooth for tooth;
They took full measure of my youth
  For seven years.

They came and told me I was free,
To go the where it pleasèd me;
I hasted that loved face to see
  I held most dear.

One met me bleak-eyed at the door,
              Toll slowly!
And in three words, or haply four,
Had blasted dreams for evermore.

I sought her where she lay asleep:
Within God's acre the winds keep
Their vigil, and the dun clouds weep,
   As though they'd blot

Out memory of that hath been
For one, yet keep another's green.
God grant all sleepers do not dream
   Of bygone lot!

There was a man—a rich man's son—
                                    Toll slowly!
Had coveted that I had won,
And for her feet a web had spun.

I faced him of a winter's night,
When all the world about was white,
As was his face in the firelight,
   Looking on me.

When doom comes with stern, Minos face,
Some rise and hail it, in their place,
And some—they grovel on their face;
   And thus did he.

For such as he there was no prayer;
                                    Toll slowly!
I struck; and when I left him there,
His blood had crimsoned all his hair.

Here in this cell they coffined me;
Toll slowly!
Hence dead to all save two or three,
And an abiding memory.

I knew—as do the dead-alive—
That I might soul from body rive,
And yet would memory survive,
To plague me still.

I knew that I no more would see
The good green grass, or feel the free
Sweet winds of heaven breathe on me
A-top a hill.

I knew sunshine would come alway
Toll slowly!
Through tracery of bars, and stay
For so few minutes of the day.

I knew that monthly moonbeam slants
Across the pillow, like a lance
Of glory flung by some mischance
Within the wall.

I knew no starbeam e'er might win
Past murk, and grime, and iron gin,
That's hedged about to keep us in,
And keep out all.

I knew the jaunty step must slow;
Toll slowly!
The blithesome voice must silent grow;
That laughter's face no more will show.

Fast turns the raven hair to white;
And gay eyes soon are only bright
Of tears that gather till the night
Shall hide their fall.

There's paces five from front to rear;
Count paces five through all the year;
And paces five is far and near
Within the wall.

Yet paces five that weave no spell;
Toll slowly!
Nor exorcise one imp of hell
Of all that myriad we tell.

CANTO THE TENTH

Slow fades the day into the night;
Toll slowly!
And slower still returns the light
That never is but halfway bright.

For us no dawn-bird sounds his horn;
Nor matin-song of lark upborne,
Doth tell us of the radiant morn
That's born anew.

There's but the clang of iron wards,
That pierce the heart as sharpened swords,
And weave their harsh, dissonant chords,
  Our dreaming through.

The day is welcome, though it bring
                    Toll slowly!
Nor good, nor ill, nor anything,
Save surcease from that brood that cling
Beneath the midnight's sable wing,

And sit beside our heavy bed,
Until the morning dawn in red,
Recalling that was done and said
  In lawless mood.

For always when God's lamps are lit,
What sadness doth upon us sit,
Who watch the bird of darkness flit
  Through solitude.

Knowing that never home-lamps burn
                    Toll slowly!
For us; nor any fond hearts yearn
For us, who do no more return.

O bitter 'tis to lie forgot
Of humankind, and friendly thought,
The while both soul and body rot
  A wall behind!

A grievous thing it is to know
That only Death can open throw
The Gate—and Death so oft doth show
  Himself unkind.

While White and Red Plague take their toll,
Leaving the body, as the soul,
Commingled in one rotten whole;
To watch the tale of years unroll!

CANTO THE ELEVENTH

I know not how they justify
        Toll slowly!
Their work who make a man to die,
And yet to live, and see no sky.

To hear each hour a passing bell,
And know it rings a funeral knell,
Is heard in utmost bounds of hell;
  And be assured

Such does not spell an end to woe;
That yet another hour must go,
And still another, even so,
  Must be endured.

I sickened, and long weeks I lay
        Toll slowly!
At door of death, and oft did pray
That it might ope for me straightway;

Till one that lay in cot beside,
At dissolution's moment cried,
"'Tis freedom!" and, so calling, died.
I thought to trace

Within his widely opened eyes,
Some inkling of the glad surprise
With which he looked on Paradise,
And old loved face.

'Twas then I knew the way to take;
Toll slowly!
'Twas then I knew that I would break
Life's fetters for my dear one's sake.

I knew not if my waking eyes
Would look on hell or paradise;
I knew nor hell nor death denies
That right of love;

That each shall win unto their own,
Despite all checks about them thrown;
And not long shall they walk alone,
Who truly love.

Upon a black midnight I died;
Toll slowly!
It was this hand of mine that tied
The rope, and thrust the stool aside."

I woke—or thought to wake—and knew,
Toll slowly!
The Thing was gone. The dawn stole through,
The casement I wide open threw.

I heard day's noises all about;
The senseless laugh, the raucous shout,
Like devils crying in a rout
  Walpurgis night.

And one doth cry a ribald curse;
And one intones a sacred verse,
Yet would be cut-throat for a purse,
  However light.

Oh, here's hypocrisy, indeed!
Toll slowly!
One picks him out a likely creed
And dons it, thinking to be freed.

And here are traitors to their kind,
Who play their parts of rats behind
Th' arras, with a malice blind,
  As is their greed.

For preferment, or tit-bit thrown,
They spy and prey upon their own;
And at the last they walk alone;
  They have their meed.

One makes parade of penitence;
Toll slowly!
And one's all injured innocence;
And one's a very saint o' Lents;

And one's a seeming Stylites
Upon a pillar, crying "Please,
To note I am not like to these,
The common herd."

The lion roars above his kill,
And it is echoed from the hill;
But men do stab in secret still,
With knife and word.

O Christ, who died two thieves between,
Toll slowly!
And pardoned one; whose wounds, yet green,
Accuse; absolve us of the mean!

EPILOGUE

The Autumn rains, the Winter snows
Unheeded fall;
But when the South Wind wakes the Rose,
What voices call!
There's the far lands, and the far seas;
And the green grass, and the green trees;
And rain, and sun, and cloud, and breeze;
And God o'er all.

O matins, and O vesper bells,
Toll slowly!
A city of a thousand cells—
A thousand individual hells,
The wherein fear and rancor dwells.

And here are grandsires, stooped and old;
Yet keeping each what frantic hold
On burned-out life; for long since sold
Is their birthright.

And here are lads of whom you'd say
That these were breeched but yesterday,
And should be loosed to shout and play,
With ball and kite—

Not drinking deep of that vile well
Toll slowly!
Of sewage spewed from mouth of hell,
More foul than any pen may tell.

Give callow youth, and gallows-bird,
And of the twain together stirred
Is born then a monstrous third—
As Frankenstein.

O better far that death should be
Of every crime the penalty,
Than such creation should go free
At any time.

Sly devils clothed in human flesh;
Toll slowly!
Whose revellings in midnight's hush
Might make Abaddon's self to blush.

Upon a wheel of solitude
They bind them of defiant mood,
And break them; and they call it good,
That fear doth fall

Upon them; and no more again,
They stand among their fellow-men,
Straight-kneed, and level-eyed, as when
They passed the wall.

What agency of theirs can make
Toll slowly!
Anew that thing they idly break
Upon a wheel for order's sake?
May God forgive them the mistake!

O would that it were but a dream,
Bred of the night!
To waken in the morning gleam,
And see the light
On faces that we loved and knew;
To hear a lark sing in the blue,
Or bustle of the avenue—
God, and we might!

FINIS

IN HIS NAME

Dedicated to a "King's Daughter,"
J. H. G.

A sorry tale it is I tell,
And yet methinks that it ends well.

"Youth will be served." O golden lad,
So very short Springtime you had!
Denied a mother's love; denied
A father's understanding pride;
And none to cherish, none to aid,
What wonder that your footsteps strayed
A little from the beaten path,
Until Fate struck in careless wrath.

Never again to run and leap;
Only to lie supine and keep
A ceaseless memory of days
Of sunshine; wood and city ways;
And God's free winds upon that brow,
That's chilled of walls and fetters now;
And, added strength to steel and stone,
Never again to walk alone!

And who's to pity; who's to care?
No one of all he loved was there.

When father, mother, sweetheart, turns
Away, and all entreaty spurns:

When all of one's own blood desert
There is small surcease for such hurt.

A minstrel sings adown the years
A song, commingled with all tears,
Of prisoners long dead and gone:
"*O Richard! O mon Roi! L'univers t'abandonne!*"

Millions there are that lie them down
In soft white beds in thorp and town,
And take delight of peaceful sleep;
But what and they were doomed to keep
That couch; and only Death might free
From pain and dark ignominy
That comrade them? With strangers all
To tend them, and a whitewashed wall
About them, tomblike. Think you they
Would welcome then the close of day?

But when to those who hardly live,
There comes the friendly hand to give
The cup of water in His name;
Then is the crowning of their pain.

Lady, a hopeless task is mine;
To sing a deed so near divine!

Like to that shining, golden beam,
That, breaking through the dun cloud's screen,
Paints those bright arches in the east,

That tell His love for great and least,
Into that darkened life you brought
The peace and love so vainly sought.

You deemed it a small thing to do,
But certes Heaven's trumpets blew
Resonant, crying, "Come and see,
Body and soul of him set free,

Of one sweet deed of charity!"

O Daughter of the Heavenly King,
Methinks that never robe nor ring
Of earthly monarch might adorn
You more than charity so worn!

'Tis hard to die with loved ones near;
With old-loved voices in one's ear;
But who can vision all the woe
That's their's, who must all lonely go
Into the dread, unfriendly dark,
With only curious eyes to mark
Their passing, and rude hands to dress;
And none to comfort, none to bless.

You spared him this last woe of all;
And kindly hands were at his call;
And no bars mocked his weakness more:
Azrael's wings, that hovered o'er,
Were like a mother's arms that fold

A dear one close, to have and hold
Safe from all sorrow, all mischance.
I think he welcomed Death's advance;
Learning at last the mother-love
That would be his in courts above.

There is so little of reward
That can be giv'n for love outpoured,
For sacrifice all freely made,
For loving hands so quick to aid;
One can but bow the head and say:
" God bless you, ever and alway!"

FLAG DAY—1920

The Flag!
And the glory of red in it!
Red of heart's-blood of it's hero-dead in it;
Flame of all patriot souls e'er sped in it.
They died on sea and battle-plain,
On gallows-tree—as Hale and Hayne;
In gaol and on prison-ship;
At Valley Forge, in winter's grip.
It's bright folds consecrate the slain
Of Lexington and Lundy's Lane;
And lie in benison upon
The dead of Shiloh—and Argonne.

The Flag!
And the splendor of white in it!
White rays striking through, like to sunlight in it.
White stars in its blue—symbols of might in it.
That freedom be our heritage,
Men served it, having scanty wage;
And on its bead-roll read to-day
The names of Franklin, Webster, Clay.
The proudest banner 'neath the sun—
'Twas fathered by a Washington!
And by a Lincoln kept so well
That not one star from out it fell.

The Flag!
And the wonder of blue in it!
All banners that ever April flew in it;
Sapphire of skies, and of violets, too, in it.
Since that white morning of its birth,
The hope of the oppressed of earth;
Pointing to freedom like that Star
The Wise Men followed from afar.
Whether of low or high estate;
Whether we serve, or stand and wait;
'Tis ours to keep it free of stain,
That these served not, nor died, in vain.

AVE ATQUE VALE

MAY THIRTIETH, NINETEEN NINETEEN

Hail and farewell!
For now your task is finished.
Hail and farewell!
For now your fight is won.
The ranks go by diminished,
By you, whose race is run.
Men of the forges and the mills,
Men of the wheatfields and the hills,
Iron men, with iron wills.
Forged, as is a tempered blade,
For the world's last crusade;
And to whose deed the proud heart thrills.

Men of the mountains—eagle men—
We had not guessed your worth before;
Men of the cities—gentlemen—
We had not known so sound of core.
Lads who dawdled o'er their beer,
Lads who measured ribbons here,
Lads whom we were wont to jeer—
Lifting high a knightly lance,
Dying to stay the Hun's advance;
Bayards, without reproach or fear.

Though other hands than ours shall dress
The low green tents that shelter you,
And alien hearts and lips shall bless

The high souls that we loved and knew,
We shall remember; we shall keep
Watch and ward the while you sleep—
That none shall hold your victory cheap.
For the high libation poured,
We have freedom from the sword;
The peaceful years to sow and reap.

Hail and farewell!
For you there's no returning.
Hail and farewell!
You will not come again;
For all our endless yearning;
For all our tears or pain.
Mother, or wife, or maid may weep,
For that a tryst you will not keep;
But ye have honor, and ye sleep.
Guests of enduring fame;
Your sacrifice not vain,
While to your feet the poppies creep.

INDEPENDENCE DAY, 1918

Oh, rouse you now to the sound of drums,
And prove you true when your hour comes.
In your country's hour of utmost need,
Answering not to the call of greed;
Giving ungrudgingly all you should

Of gold, or service, or own heart's blood.
If you shall do this, you shall do well,
And your children's children the tale shall tell.

An olden tale—they tell it still—
And where's the heart that does not thrill
  To Hale beneath the gallows-tree,
Deaf to the fife's insulting play,
And crying, " I regret to-day
  I've but one life to give to thee, my country!"?

If you shrink from the cost, however great,
You are not worthy your high estate.
The sword you have drawn shall set men free;
And how well you have chosen, your sons shall see.
So count not the cost till the task be done,
And look not back till the fight be won,
Lest the flame on your altars sink and die
And your freedom be but a living lie.

There's Lawrence on his bloody deck—
His good ship but a shattered wreck,
  Fast in the foeman's grip—
Wounded and dying—as he knew—
Yet still to duty, staunch and true,
  His last word, " Don't give up the ship!"

Will you give less than your fathers gave?
Will you do less than your storied brave?
Is the question that waits your answer, now
That you've put your hand at last to the plow.
Shall Freedom now have a newer birth,
Or perish forever from off the earth?
Would you be a freeman still, or slave?
O answer as befits the brave!

In your hour of doubt—and be sure 'twill come—
When you say, "What avails it all that we've done?"
Let Paul Jones answer you aright.
Scarce could he strike an answering blow;
Yet, called to surrender, answers, "No!
I have not yet begun to fight!"

MOTHER'S DAY

For a day, or for an hour,
You may wear a snow-white flower
On your breast;
For the one who, all-forgiving,
Whether dead, or whether living,
Loves you best;
Who, though brand of Cain were burning
On your brow, and all else spurning,
Yet would welcome your returning
To home nest.

Here's a debt too great for payment;
It was more than food or raiment,
That she gave.
Hers the pain, the burden-bearing;
Hers the never-ending caring;
Though you'd lave
Worn hands with tears of sorrow;
Heap them high with gold to-morrow;
All the wealth you'd earn, or borrow,
She'd not have.

She would have you but remember;
Blow to flame Love's dying ember;
Come back home.
That her vigil be not bootless;
All her heart's petition fruitless
For her own.
Go as Lazarus, or Dives ;
Go in state, or go in gyves;
Still her love is like to ivies,
Round us thrown.

ORA PRO NOBIS

DEDICATE

TO

THE LIFE PRISONER

Pray ye for us, who are the living dead;
Who have no part, nor any lot in life;
Who may not e'er be victors in high strife;
Or ever know the laurel-crowned head:
Must ever leave the loving word unsaid,
And live unblessed of love of child, or wife,
In a grey world with fell suspicion rife,
Till even Life's handmaiden, Hope, be fled.

Pray ye for us, that early we may be
Cleansed of our stain by Christ, His own dear
grace;
Freed of this life, and of our prison free,
To dwell with our dear saints in a green place
Of Paradise, and see His host of stars
Sweep ever past, unchecked of bounds or bars.

RHEIMS: 1914

From out the western panes the glory fades,
And shadows people now each fretted stall,
And gather thickly by the painted wall.
Shades of old warrior priests and sainted maids;
And those who died for Christ in Viking raids;

Their faces stern, they wait, expectant all,
Of God's dire vengeance on the Hun let fall;
Most meet for those who His own house invades.

When—is it vision, or a waking dream?
That altar is a hilltop, gaunt and bare,
Yet consecrate; for still a Cross is there,
Lifting its burden to the star's faint gleam;
While all the aisles a Voice is crying through:
" Father, forgive; they know not what they do!"

MORNING AT CAPE ANN

Yon headland looms upon the horizon,
Forbidding, black, as 'twere a huge Afrite
New-risen from the wave, and gath'ring might,
Ere stalking landward through a tragic dawn.
The curtains of the mist are closely drawn,
Lest mortal eye be blinded of the sight;
For now Aurora leaves the couch of Night,
To walk in beauty on the hills beyond.

A vagrant wind comes stealing from the sea
To ruffle all the drooping leaves, and wake
The lark yet sleeping in the meadow-brake,
And send the hawk full-circling o'er the lea.
The misty curtain thins, is rent away,
Revealing all the splendor of the Day.

IN THE WILDERNESS

It was a lonely and a silent land
That lay about me, watching from the hill
In the November twilight's gathering chill.
No hint of human presence marred the strand
Where forest marched with river, hand in hand,
Undreaming of man's coming, and his skill
In making over Nature to his will.
Perchance some day a roaring town shall stand
Where now the deer come trooping down to drink;
The pleasant murmur of the waterfall
Be lost in clamor of the market-place.
So be it! Man must lengthen, link by link,
The chain wherewith he holds the earth in thrall,
Or vanish as a mist from off its face.

PITTSBURGH

I saw it from a hilltop one midnight—
A wizard's cauldron, wherein men transmute
Base metals into gold, man into brute.
The rose of fire that blossomed in my sight
Is but a furnace baring heart of white,
Ere yielding to its masters what tribute!
A thousand hasting engines wail and hoot
Challenge and greeting to the tortured night.

The human tides that ceaseless rise and fall,
Responsive to the changing pulse of steel;
The kindly darkness hid them from my gaze.
Saxon, and Slav, and Latin, Afric—all
Fast bounden as of old to labor's wheel,
The while their masters walk in primrose ways.

TO THE CHOIR OF ST. LAURENTIUS' R. C. CHURCH

"I was in prison, and ye came unto me,"
And bearing with you such rich gift of song,
As thrilled me like to bugles that cry long,
And urge me to a fight I fain would flee.
The trumpet voices sound. Thy knight I'd be,
O Lady Mary, clean and brave and strong,
To meet in Ephesus the wild beast throng,
And keep full faith with thy dear Son and thee.

As may God's angels flying over Hell,
And singing as they go about His work,
Let fall a splendid strophe through the murk;
That, like to Jesus at Samarian well,
Forever quenches one soul's burning thirst,
So make you, O sweet singers, best of worst.

ON A PORTRAIT OF MISS C———

Dear little lady, had I tongue to flatter,
A rosy future I would paint for you;
With lovers mad for you as any hatter,
Or as March hare, too.
Sighing all the night long 'neath your windows;
Singing of your beauty to the stars;
I will only say, I've seen your likeness,
And—I curse the bars.

I would be some score of years the younger;
Stroll with you adown an April lane;
Though as courtier I was ever bungler,
I would try again.
Haply when the firefly lamps were litten,
And the dew lay heavy on the grass;
You might watch with me the gold stars mirrored
In the water's glass.

I would speak no word of love or longing;
I, who scarce would dare to take your hand;
Stainless as the lilies that are thronging
All the river's strand.
I would play the pale, despairing lover,
Worshiping, yet knowing it but vain;
As the moths around the night-lamps hover,
Careless of the flame.

So I'd hang upon your lightest saying;
  Dance and grimace, but to see you smile;
Glad to be the comrade of your playing
  For a little while.
Little lady, 'tis but idle dreaming,
  I shall ne'er see but your pictured face;
Yet to me that one brief moment's seeming
  Gives new heart of grace.

TO EAMONN DE VALERA

PRESIDENT OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC

And whom came you forth to see?
  A conqueror silken clad,
Riding slow through the city,
  With only the mothers sad?
Clangor of trumpets before him,
  Shouting that swells like a storm:
Riding slow through the city,
  As one to the purple born.

Nay, not so will you see him—
  A simple gentleman, he.
Only the children of Erin
  Can vision the majesty
That goes before him, about him;
  For there in their youth and their pride
Go the patriot dead of all Erin,
  Soul to his soul allied.

Wolfe Tone and O'Connell
  And Patrick Sarsfield are there;
And the Lord Edward Fitzgerald
  And Emmett (O trumpets, blare!).
And there with the elder heroes,
  Gallant and brave as they,
Walk Phadraic Pearse and Connolly,
  The dead of the newer day.

Dark was the night of Erin—
  So very dark and so long,
That scarce can we be persuaded
  Of the coming of the dawn.
That the blood of the martyrs shall triumph,
  That the fields of their sowing we reap,
And the epitaph of young Emmett,
  May early be graven deep.

O wake from your sleep, ye slain,
  That people Drogheda's graves;
And speak to the hearts of your children,
  That they no longer be slaves!
And all tall chieftains of Tara,
  Brian and Cairbre and Conn,
Rouse ye, and bring to the battle,
  The soul of a day that is gone.

That the chieftains may sit in Tara,
  And make such laws as are right;
That the minstrels may strike in gladness

Their harps that were dumb for the night;
That the blood of our best and our bravest,
Water no foreign lands.
O Eamonn de Valera,
Is not this the task to your hands?

TO THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

When the harvesting is ended, and earth's tale of days is done,
And the lightnings and the thunders tell the Great Assize is come;
In that hour of splendid triumph, when the earth and heavens meet,
Will Thy warriors, O Jesus, lay their trophies at Thy feet?

Mitred abbot, mighty prelate, all the saints of Mother Church,
They shall bring rich gifts unto Thee, but Thy kindling eye shall search
All the throng for Thine own soldiers who have counted all else dross,
But the teaching of the nations, and the bearing of Thy cross.

There's Thy generals: Ignatius, Aquaviva, all the rest,

Who have led Thy van of battle with Thy cross
upon their breast.
There's the treasure of their gaining, all the finest
of the wheat—
Countless souls of their far gleaning, of Thy free-
dom made complete.

These have given joy for mourning; these have
given peace for strife;
These have poured Thine oil of gladness into many
a bruised life.
To the broken and the weary, who have fainted by
the way,
These have stretched out hands of helping, that
they live for Thee to-day.

To the monarch in his palace, to the captive in
his cell,
These have thundered forth Thy message, "Choose
ye now 'twixt Heaven and Hell."
All the Seven Seas have known them, and earth's
uttermost frontier;
To the farthest jungle-dweller did Thy warriors
appear.

And no might of men could stay them, nor defeat
the end they sought;
That unto all men and nations, should Thy Gospel,
Lord, be taught.

And upon that day of triumph, when Thy waking trumpets sound,
In the black gown of the Jesuit, are Thy proudest warriors found.

TO THE MEMORY OF A. M. C. D.

Yours, O sweetly singing soul that's crowned now with stars;
Yours is a golden memory nor time nor usage mars.
Sweet-scented is your memory as ever myrrh or musk;
Sweet as breath of isle of spice that's seaward blown at dusk.
O sweet to us your memory as any that we keep—
Memory of home, or friends, or mother that we weep.

All the broken hearts you healed are singing now your praise,
And all the broken men you helped to better things and days,
Are mourning now your passing, and they will not be consoled;
Are as sheep without a shepherd, careless of the rain and cold;

And wistful for your singing voice to lead them
once again,
As in other days it led them when they were but
broken men.

O hard and bitter was our lot when first to us you
came;
The darkness and the lonely cell and the abiding
shame.
You trod a straightened path with us for many
weary years:
In His Name you counselled "Courage!" In His
Name you banished fears;
And the still, small voice conquered—terror shall
not come again—
And they hearkened to your counsel, and are
making of us—men!

TO J. J. M.

JANUARY 1, 1920

If the New Year bring you gladness,
Meet it with unchanging face;
And the world will grant you wisdom—
Set you in still higher place.

And the New Year bring you sadness,
Smile above the aching heart;
And the world will know and cheer you
Till the wound shall ease its smart.

And it bring you disappointment,
   Never weep nor veil your face;
And you'll find that though you've fallen,
   You will still have won a race.

May the New Year bring you wisdom;
   May you never know content
With the goal you've reached, but ever
   See ahead the goal you meant.

For all things are had of striving,
   And all happiness is there;
They alone have joy of living,
   Who a forward banner bear.

There is never foe can stay you,
   And your sword, and will, be keen;
But the battle's lost forever,
   And you rest beside life's stream.

It is yours to bravely stem it;
   With a high resolve each day,
That the night-time on its coming
   Finds you well upon your way.

To a goal that flies before you,
   To a fortune that retreats,
To the sunset's supreme glory,
   Gained of morn's and noon's defeats.

All the world for a Valhalla,
And a fight that's never won;
Never lost; and never slackens,
Till the fighting day be done.

Standing then all bruised and battered,
In the evening's interlude;
Viewing all the field behind you,
May you know your fight was good.

That although your sword be broken,
That although the crown be lost,
You may count the scars of battle
Not unworthy of the cost.

This my wish for you this New Year:
Never arbor of delight;
But a field of splendid battle,
And a stout heart for the fight.

THE WHISTLIN' COLLEEN

TO L. C. M.

There's gold here and rich gear and lasses fine an' gay,
But the green hills of Ireland are far, far away,
And Kathleen, macushla, oh, where are you th' day?

My Kathleen Mavourneen,
With your eyes of Irish grey;
It's many the "Stack o' Barley,"
I danced with you away!
It's many an hour we wandered
By Bendemeer's stream;
Such the dreams you bring to me,
O whistlin' colleen!

There's broad streets an' beautiful, an' buildin's fine an' tall,
But there's no dusty, crooked street like that o' Ballingall;
And th' peat-smoke, th' sweet smoke, I'll smell no more at all.

It's Nancy Hynes! Nancy Hynes!
O come and walk with me;
I'm off to Philadelphia,
So far beyant the sea.
I'll pluck no more the shamrock,
Where Shannon's waters gleam;
But you bring old Ireland o'er to me,
O whistlin' colleen!

TO THE LADIES OF SAN DOMINGO CHORAL CLUB
CHORAL

The Glory of Life is Music;
  Rhythms that beat and swell,
As waves of the broad Atlantic
  Beat out a doomed ship's knell;
The little semiquavers
  That ripple and glide and run,
Like whispering leaves of the forest;
  Or waves that dance in the sun.

These walls were made for sighing—
  So bleak, so cold, so bare;
For a high, wild voice crying
  Upon the midnight air;
Yet one sweet note, in dying,
  Can make them passing fair
As any high-walled garden,
  With roses blooming there.

IMITATIONE DE CHRISTI

TO D. J. C.

Who sit in the seats of the mighty, vested in purple, apart,
Are never so near to the Master as they who toil in the mart;

Who bear the heat and the burthen of a never-
ending day,
Giving the sum of service, and never a thought to
pay,
Leaving the law of tooth and claw, to walk in the
Master's way.

For His hands—ere the nails had pierced them—
He had not feared to soil;
His brow—ere the thorns ensanguined—had
known the sweat of toil.
He is brother to those who labor, toiling with
faithful hands,
That the myriad mouths of the world be fed, even
as He commands;
And the gospel of labor and love of your neighbor
be law in the uttermost lands.

To voice no scorn of the weakling, the proven
drone, or the fool;
With never self-praise of one's skill, or one's
strength, or one's sharper tool.
To turn not aside from the stranger needing a
hand to aid;
To give to a friend unstinting, and fear not to go
unpaid;
For the talent lost then shall become as ten when
the great Accounting's made.

Giving no thought to the morrow, leaving it all to
Him;
But living the day as He'd live it, lifting the
evening hymn
With soul unscathed of the tempter, touching His
garment's hem,
To be healed of the day's dark issues, glad of your
knowing then,
That you lived a day in the Master's way for the
weal of your fellow-men.

TO THE CHOIR OF ST. STEPHEN'S R. C. CHURCH

St. Stephen's was a vision of the heavens opened
wide,
The shining courts, and Throne thereof, and One
who sat beside,
And sweetly smiled upon him, as beneath the stones
he died.

So vision came to each of us who listened to your
song—
A vision of us standing 'neath God's heaven, tall
and strong,
Free as His air and sunshine, and unscathed of any
wrong.

A vision of the Might-Have-Been, the Dream left
unfulfilled;
The splendid dreaming of our youth, to which our
boy's heart thrilled,
And which the weeds of after years so quickly
choked and killed.

To some rich joy of service, and to some full store
of gold;
To some a death right glorious, where drums like
thunder rolled;
To some a humble fireside, with but love to have
and hold.

For that your song hath brought to us the Vision
long denied;
Gave to us for an Hour of Gold all things for which
we sighed;
You have full meed of gratitude from all who here
abide.

TO THE SODALITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY OF ST. STEPHEN'S R. C. CHURCH

The wild heart, the child heart,
The heart of wife, or maid,
May lean on heart of Mary,

And rest all undismayed
Of earthly ills, or earthly cares;
Secure of strength whatever fares,
And of all pain allayed.

The little things, like nettle stings,
That vex us most of all;
A loved one takes a step aside;
A friend hears not our call;
The little pin-pricks that distress,
All vanish into nothingness,
At Mary's feet let fall.

The bitter cup, the darkling cup,
That all of us must drink,
When Sorrow nests within the heart,
And Hope fails link by link.
Then Mary stoops from her white throne,
Remembering anguish of her own,
And lifts us from the brink.

TO THE ORPHEUS CLUB OF PHILADELPHIA

"Music hath charms," the poet wrote,
And phrased it excellently well;
Ulysses feared the Siren's note,
And by it Orpheus conquered Hell;

Yet left Eurydice behind,
As you leave us; but never mind,
You sang, and we're the more resigned.

"MANDALAY"

You who followed the world around,
  What were you thinking then?
Did you hear the drums of the desert sound,
  Calling you back again
To the blazing reach of a tropic beach,
  Or the gloom of a jungle way?
Did the old love wake, and you long to take
  "The road to Mandalay"?

"ROLLING DOWN TO RIO"

You who followed the sea in ships,
  What did it say to you?
Did you taste the salt sea-spray on your lips,
  As you followed the chanty through?
You that have seen the long seas lift—
  One of a roaring crew—
When the pale stars peer through the scudding drift,
  What dreams did it bring to you?

"BRIAR ROSE"

For you it bloomed in a country lane,
  For you in a city street;
The one Rose, the White Rose,
  You trod beneath your feet.

The Wild Rose, the child Rose,
  That ne'er will bloom again;
O you who plucked it carelessly,
  What were you thinking then?

TO THE CATHOLIC CHORAL CLUB OF PHILADELPHIA

O choric song that leaps like flame,
Then sinks, diminuendo strain,
  Like far-heard voices of the night;
To rise, to swiftly rise again,
As eagle newly freed of chain,
  And questing for his eyried height.

We hear the beat of "Fairy Shoon,"
Dancing 'neath Midsummer moon,
To a faint-heard, haunting tune,
Such as mothers softly croon
  In the bedtime hour.
Golden lads at mother's knee—
Promise of the man-to-be—
Once we could the fairies see;
Never more, alas, shall we
  Own that childish dower.

Each one has his own "Musette,"
Loved, or lost, or hoped for yet;
Eyes of blue, or eyes of jet,
Shine like stars in Heaven set,
   To guide the wayward feet.
O holy Mary, Mother, Maid,
Grant to us, who ask thine aid,
That each shall have his little maid,
When the dreadful debt is paid,
   Heart to heart may meet.

"THE AMERICANS COME!"

"The Americans come," and the Avenue
Is gay with the old Red, White and Blue;
And there's tears and smiles, for they all of them knew
That Victory marched beside them, too;
   And the fight was won.
Oh, would that we in a far-off day
Might fight, and triumph, and march as they;
Be foremost of all in a splendid fray,
In a hopeless hour, that men might say,
   "The Americans come!"

TO LITTLE MISS M———

O Littlest Lady, why the pout?
  Who hath offended thee?
Hath some rash mortal dared to flout
  Thy childish majesty?
Then he were but a traitor knight,
And should be banished from thy sight.

Thy kingdom's of the heart alone,
  And veriest tyranny;
And yet thy subjects make no moan,
  Are well content to see
The scepter in thy rose-leaf hand,
And hearken to thy least command.

To be thy loyal knight and true—
  What better thing than this?
Who'd blench from deed of derring-do,
  Rewarded by thy kiss?
I'd rise up from such accolade,
A Galahad, O sweetest maid!

When then the fairy-prince shall come,
  Responsive to th' unuttered call;
May thy last kingdom to be won
  Be then the goodliest of all;
And thou, as in the fairy lore,
Live happily for evermore.

TO CAPTAIN DAVID FALLON, M. C.

ANZAC, MARCH 10, 1918

Captain, the thudding guns we hear
Calling through the day and year,
  Muttering persistently.
Calling in the morning's gray;
Calling at the close of day;
  Uttering insistently
A call to us, who have no name,
To reeling deck, or battle-plain,
To expiate a life of shame.

Captain, the fields of France are red
With blood of best that Britain bred;
  And mingled in that ruddy tide
Is blood of men alike to us,
Who lifted blind eyes from the dust
  And sensed the Glory, ere they died.
Felon is there, and parasite,
That wrongly lived, yet died a-right,
The while the Grail flamed on their sight.

Captain, our souls are dark with sin,
And oft a devil dwells therein;
  And yet one spark of living fire
Dwells in the breast of everyone,
And at the throbbing of the drum
  Leaps to the urge of our desire

That we should stand in Flanders' mud
And dare to stay the German flood
With barrier of our heart's blood.

Captain, the guns are never still,
Calling all peoples to the kill;
   Yet do we linger here,
Eating anxious hearts away
With longing for that splendid fray.
   It is not death we fear;
Rather we fear, in days to come,
To hear men say—their task well done—
" What did you when we fought the Hun? "

TO W. R. M.

I kept the faith, but you, but you,
   You failed me in my need;
I never deemed you aught but true,
   Faithful in thought and deed.
That you should play the coward's part
Was as a dagger in my heart.

I died a thousand deaths that day—
   Anger, and grief, and shame—
To know you were but common clay,
   That I had loved in vain;
Hell hath no punishment like this,
To know too late the Judas kiss.

The cup of trembling I must drink—
  You filled it to the brim;
The chain that binds me, link on link,
  You forged in some mad whim.
You tombed me with the living dead,
And no one word of pity said.

IN MEMORIAM

MRS. E. R., AET. 93

Those hands that never quite knew rest,
Lie now so quiet on that breast;
Hands that were worn of toiling,
Yet are far too lovely to forget.

Those lips that spoke so loving word,
Will nevermore by speech be stirred.
The tireless feet that served our will,
Know peace at last, and are most still.

The ears that never failed to hear,
Our faintest note of pain or fear,
Are sealed forever to our woes;
And yet, methinks, she hears and knows.

Hope, that the best of your life's yet before you;
Faith, that the world's not against you, but for
    you;
Charity for all, though doubly they bore you.

Honor, and what does it mean to you?
A Watchword, a Star, a Flame that burns steadily,
Or a rope made of straw that is broken too readily?
A Tower and a Sword in the hour of disaster,
Or a Voice in your ear that but makes you run
    faster?
A breath, and a bubble,
That only fools cherish;
Or a treasure worth double
The gold that will perish?
A Grail, hidden deep in the heart of each one of us,
To be guarded and kept and passed on to the son
    of us;
Or a Something that doesn't appeal to the run
    of us?
Honor, and what has it been to you?

Friendship, and what have you done with it?
A growl, and a scowl for the friend that you're
    meeting,
Or a gay, cheerful word, and a smile for a greeting?
And when he's gone by, is he still a "good fellow,"

Or is it like this, " Sure, I know that he's yellow."
When he's on the down grade,
Do you stand by unheeding,
Or give to him the aid
He's expecting and needing?
Should his burden be great, are you trying to lighten it?
If his future be dark, are you trying to brighten it?
Or did you forge his chain, and are wishful to tighten it?
Friendship, and whom have you won with it?

Honor, the Glory of life, and the Soul of it;
Friendship, the Story of life, and the Goal of it;
Honor and Friendship, and there you've the whole of it.

TO THE CHOIR OF ST. JOHN'S ASYLUM

A child note, like lark note,
Is ringing in my ears,
And like a Magic Carpet bears
Me back adown the years.
And lo! I am a boy again,
With face uplifted to the rain,
And knowing naught of sin, or shame,
Nor aught of earthly cares.

O flute note! O lute note!
  That stirs the blood like wine,
Recalling all the joy I had
  Of vanished summertime.
I see the sun's gold on the wheat;
I hear the organ down the street;
I feel the cool wave lap my feet;
  O careless, happy lad!

O sad note! O sweet note!
  That wrings the heart of me,
Rememb'ring all I might have been—
  Can never hope to be.
Better than gold and richest gear;
Better than most the world holds dear—
Place or fame—is a conscience clear
  Of all offense to men.

O gay note! O glad note!
  We smile behind our tears.
The boy's heart's still in the most of us,
  Persisting through the years.
Old dreams of our youth are ours still;
The goal we sought is over the hill,
To be reached to-morrow, if God will,
  And we but strive, and trust.

AD MEMORIAM

THE REVEREND FATHER O'KANE

Fifty years of service in the vineyards of the Lord;
Fifty years of garnering, of love and strength outpoured;
Only Christ, and Mary, Mother, know what harvest stored.

And what can we give for that you've given;
For the hope renewed and the blessed leaven
Of faith in an hour of sore distress;
For the helping hand and the cheery word,
When the soul dropped down like a wounded bird,
And Life itself were but sorry guest.

Tender to the broken heart, as mother to her child;
Patient with the impatient, gentle with the mild;
Thundering with flaming wrath against the sin-defiled.

For a sorrow shared and a lightened burden,
You have our love for your only guerdon—
A meager wage for a task laborious;
But if seed you've sown should sprout and flower,
There'd be rejoicing in Heaven this hour,
O'er many a darkened life made glorious.

A high road to Arcady
  Lies across the hills,
Where winds are free and riotous,
  And golden sunlight spills—
Like wine from wide-mouthed beakers
  Some careless Godling fills—
Adown the robes of living green,
  That to their gaunt ribs cling;
Along the road to Arcady
  We go a-gypsying.

A low road to Arcady
  Hugs the river's shore,
Sentinelled by alder-clump
  And ghostly sycamore;
And echoing by night and day
  The flood's resurgent roar.
And all along its flanks at dawn
  The vampire mist-wraiths cling,
And haunt the road to Arcady
  We go adventuring.

A white road to Arcady
  Runs across the plain
Between high-serried walls of maize,
  Soft murmurous waves of grain;
With here and there a poppy-patch,
  Like to a crimson stain.

And there's a stretch of osage hedge—
  A linnet in't to sing—
Along *that* road to Arcady
  We go a-loitering.

A wood road to Arcady
  (Arched and walled with green)
Is musical with choristers
  Behind the living screen;
And flakes and pools of sunlight falls,
  The moving leaves between.
All odorous of arbutus
  And other blooms of Spring,
Is the wood-road to Arcady
  We go a-journeying.

The one road to Arcady
  May be a city street,
Or may be yet the country lane
  That's kind to wearied feet,
Or yet the daisy-strewn slope
  Where field and forest meet.
Who'd find a road to Arcady,
  Need but one only thing—
However rough the road may be—
  A right good will to sing.

EPITAPH FOR AN AMERICAN SOLDIER

He was some mother's well-loved son—
So fine he looked in martial guise—
And now in alien earth he lies,
And hears no more the tuck of drum,
Nor sees the shell-flare in the skies.
Like to some seeker for a prize
In a great race that has been run,
The consciousness of duty done,
Looked from his widely opened eyes.

That Freedom have a newer birth;
That Truth, and Justice only reign;
That Right prevail upon the earth;
Man's upward struggle be not vain—
For this he sits by a strange hearth
And sentinels the Picard plain.

HIC JACET

THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY
August 5, 1912—June 26, 1916
(*Sic Transit Gloria Alces Roosveltii*)

If you would weep,
Leave you your tears unshed;
If you would mock,

Leave you the jest unsaid.
Too great a thing lies buried here
For foolish word or futile tear.
It was the Vision, and the Dream;
It was the Promise, and the Gleam,
And it is dead!

So let it go,
The splendid promise of its birth
All unfulfilled;
It was too fine a thing for earth.
The million jeer, but we that mourn
Do know it for the Heaven-born,
And come to earth before its time,
And count its passing as a crime,
Now it is dead.

THE GATHERING

From the queer little towns with the sounding names
'Way up in the hills or 'way out on the plains,
They went marching away to the war.

There was Bill Jones, from Accokeek,
Hard by the Eastern Sho';
And Luis Rey, from San Felipe,

Will ride the range no more.
Old Glo'ster sends a fisher lad—
Tom Nickerson 'twould be—
To sleep in an Argonne defile
With Red Cloud, of Pine Tree.

Jim Boone, of Breathitt County,
The pride of Turkey Track;
And Pierre Lebon, of Beaver Pond,
Who brought no right arm back.
Nels Nelson, of Good Thunder;
Sam Parks, of Saco, Maine—
Were "buddies" there in Belleau Wood,
Though they ne'er meet again.

Dick Lee, of Shenandoah;
Jean Lass, of Bayou Scie,
Were at Château-Thierry
With Si Long, of Danbury.
While Terry Wood, of Fergus Falls;
Jack Cameron, of Dyea;
And Andy Bark, of Estes Park,
Were up St. Mihiel way.

O best little towns on God's green earth,
In the blood of your sons you have proven your worth;
You were well worth dying for!

"Killed in action," the message read;
And they had been but one year wed.
No brief, accompanying word of praise;
No medal for the neighbor's gaze.

She could not picture him as dead—
  Whose farewell kisses thrilled her yet;
"He was so glad of life," she said;
  And knowing that her eyes were wet,
For very pride of that she read—
  How he had led the wild onset,
Falling, as the foemen fled,
  Dead on their utmost parapet.

That day there echoes down the street
The trampling of the homing feet—
There will be none for her to greet.

Her vengeance rises like a flame;
Surely they ask not God in vain
That He should champion the weak?
"God, give them to the eagle's beak!"

His face smiles on her from the wall;
  His son it is upon her knee—
He was so splendid, strong and tall,
  And never more his face to see!

She reads the meaning of it all,
  The weary years that are to be;
And says, "Nor any spring or fall
  Shall ever bring him back to me."

Remembering a world to save
From arch-dominion of the knave,
The woman's part is to be brave.

BEYOND THE GATE OF DREAMS

Beyond the Gate of Dreams
What companions have I!

There is still the little maid—
Eyes like cornflowers in the sun—
As in other days we played,
So we race and so we run,
Hand in hand through a bright mist
Of memories of days we kissed.
Never voice to call us home
From the flow'ry glades we roam.

There I find the little lad—
Never in another place—
Always laughing, always glad,
Holding all of childish grace.
As the dawn on snowy peaks,

Is the bloom upon his cheeks;
And the face he lifts to mine—
Very like, O wife, to thine!

There I have the friends of youth,
Old companions of old ways.
Time has spared them there its ruth;
Its relentless weight of days.
There's a fair green countryside,
Where I walk with they beside;
And at cock-crow, e'er they flee,
All their faces smile on me.

In a dim-lit, quiet place,
Scented like an old love-tune,
Rich with beauties of her grace,
Bright with silver of the moon;
Waits the dearest shade of all.
"Mother! mother!" loud I call,
As I haste to lay my head
On the breast of one long dead.

Beyond the Gate of Dreams,
Rare companions have I!

COMRADES

From out the dark abyss of Time,
   What visions come to me!
You tread with me the primal clay;
Faithful comrade and friend alway,
Brother-in-arms in the battle-day,
   Ever your face I see.
Since man first emerged from the slime,
In every age, in every clime,
   Never apart were we.

The battle wanes at Salamis,
   The Grecian ships give chase;
A Persian galley, sinking fast,
Its captain by the reeling mast
Defiant, one last javelin cast,
   Straight-sped into your face.
Your shield was down, he might not miss,
I rushed before, and knew it bliss
   To perish in your place.

When Alexander graced the feast
   In Susa's palace-hall,
My head on a white bosom lay,
And wine had stolen wit away;
The flames were reaching for their prey,
   I did not heed your call.
You would not leave me—sodden beast—
But chose to stay, counting life least,
   And friendship most of all.

When Antioch held high revel,
  Beneath the Roman sway,
You were a noble, rich and great,
And plotted 'gainst the Roman state;
I was the beggar at your gate;
  You knew me not that day:
Yet when the Roman vengeance fell,
I perished with you, as was well—
  Such was the Roman way.

Out again on the Serpent's track
  The long ships put to sea,
Bound for the sunny Southern shore
To harry the Christian Frank once more;
Gay we tug at the heavy oar—
  Vikings tall are we!
Then in the roar of the battle wrack,
Fighting Berserk, back to back,
  So fades that memory.

The vision comes again, and this
  Is Senlac's stricken field;
The shield-wall's broken, Harold's slain,
The Norman arrows fall like rain;
Dying, as fits a Saxon thane,
  Who scorns to flee or yield;
Impatient for the bright sword's kiss:
When through the bloody battle-mist,
  Your face to me's revealed.

I mount with you a ruined wall;
  "God wills it!" is the cry.
Godfrey's knights, in battered steel,
Bloody now from head to heel;
Before the Sepulchre we kneel,
  The Moslem dead anigh.
The Crescent standards sink and fall;
The Cross is triumphant and tall—
  And doth the vision die.

The records of the Past are sped;
  Now is the seeming real.
Brothers we are as in the Past—
The olden glamour round us cast;
The olden bond yet holds us fast,
  As 'twere a bond of steel.
Each Golden Day behind us fled
Is presage of the days ahead
  That Time shall yet reveal.

MY JEWELS

O love, the hours we passed together
  Are but a Golden Memory;
As blue-bell plucked among the heather
  Doth grace a lover's treasury;
So keep I in a secret place
The jewelled hours that frame your face.

'Twas in this hour that we met—
Nearest my heart 'tis worn—
A diamond in a yellow net,
On porphyry base upborne.
Blue as the blue of April skies,
But not so blue as were your eyes.

'Twas in this hour that we kissed—
A ruby, wondrous red,
Paired with a starry amethyst
And set in golden bed;
Passion and Purity, to be
The torture and delight of me.

And in this hour we parted, dear;
A perfect, splendid pearl—
As though it were a Goddess' tear,
Caught in a shining curl.
I keep it from the rest apart,
That token of a broken heart.

So close I keep them, each and all,
Safe hidden from the day;
Lest Time's rude hand upon them fall,
Or thief should steal away;
In midnight hour to con them o'er,
And vainly wish that there were more.

ARAB DEATH SONG

There's lances and long swords far-flashing in the sun;
A good fight, a last fight, and Paradise is won.
The warm sands, the black sands, shall drink the blood of me,
To rise again in pomegranate, or golden fruit of tree.
  Allah akbar! God is great!
  Who am I to rail at fate?

There's tall sons, and strong sons, to keep the black tents well,
And pay for me the blood debt, and send the Giaour to hell.
Oh, let them never mourn for me, a tryst to-night I keep;
On the breast of God's Apostle I will lay my head and sleep.
  Allah akbar! God is great!
  Who am I to rail at fate?

There's houris two-and-seventy awaiting my demise;
Their lips are flaming coral and frankincense and spice;
Their bosoms gleam so whitely, their breath is like to musk,
And their eyes are like the camp-fires that call me home at dusk.
  Allah akbar! God is great!
  Who am I to rail at fate?

THE QUESTION

Dear, when I return to thee,
  In a coming Golden Day,
What shall then thy greeting be?
  Wilt thou bid me go or stay?

For the burden of the years,
  Shall I find a sweet redress;
Recompense for all my tears
  In thine added tenderness?

Should I look into thine eyes,
  And no answering spark be there,
Freedom were a sorry prize,
  Knowing that thou didst not care.

I would have thee greet me thus—
  As of lovers parted long—
Remembering the olden trust,
  Forgetful of the ancient wrong.

Saying, I was ever brave;
  Answering, I was ever true;
This the greeting that I crave,
  Dear, when I come back to you.

R. S. V. P.
JULY, 1917

What will you say when a child shall ask,
What did you in the world's great task?
How will you phrase your answer then
When one asks, "Were you of Pershing's men?"
How will you look, and what will you say
When others tell of the battle-day?

Must we bow our heads to enduring shame,
While our brothers win to a deathless fame?
Shall we, who are ready and willing, aye,
Ready and willing to do and die,
Be denied that right of a man to give
All that he hath that his soul may live?

Debtors we are to the Law we broke,
And we would pay in the battle-smoke
For all that was done; make payment there
On deck, or in breach, or the upper air;
Whether to life or to death we win,
We would be free of the stain of sin.

If it be death, then in cause like this,
Death were sweet as a loved one's kiss;
If it be life, it were new-begun
By grace of a heavy task well done.

WHEN WE COME HOME

When I come home, O mother dear,
I would that no one else be near,
For I would be the boy again
And have you comfort me—as then.
I'd have my bowl of milk-and-bread,
And see white sheets, and pillows spread,
Whereon to lay my weary head.
And 'neath the counterpane I'd creep,
And have you kiss me, ere I'd sleep.
To know ourselves no more alone,
Is our reward when we come home.

When I come home to you, my wife,
It will be to a newer life;
All of the past forgotten, dead,
And we young lovers, newly wed.
Then I shall do the thing you ask,
Take up with you the daily task;
Happy in your love to bask,
And walk with you adown the years,
The while the Happy ending nears.
For grief and shame that we have known,
There will be love when we come home.

When I come home, sweetheart of mine,
To greet you, as in olden time,
At garden gate; how I shall thrill

To see you waiting—as you will.
Then half intoxicate with bliss
At being free of place like this,
To steal one satisfying kiss.
Then shall begin a Happy Day
That nevermore shall pass away.
For weary years we wait, alone,
There's recompense when we get home.

MY MOTHER'S SONGS

Of evenings, ere the lamps were lit,
'Twas then my mother used to sit
  And croon some olden strain;
And I a laddie at her knee—
Oh, would to God that I could be
  That laddie but again!
Half-hearing; dreaming of the sea;
Wild battles, that I meant to be,
  A knight without a stain.

The crimson flooded all the west;
She sang the songs each loved the best:
  "Oh, woe to Barbara Allen!"
"Three times around went that gallant ship;"
And in my sight she seemed to dip
  Her proud masts downward fallen.
And then, as Heaven's lamps hung out,
Starred all its battlements about:
  "Jerusalem the golden."

Her hand caressed my drooping head,
" 'Tis time my laddie was in bed,"
  She'd say, still softly singing:
" By cool Siloam's shady rill."
And I'd beg yet another still,
  Though evening bells were ringing;
And moon swam up, such golden ball,
As on blue dish that I let fall
  While to the table bringing.

And I can see her still, to-day,
Rocking in the moon's soft ray
  To the cadence of the song:
" Jesus, lover of my soul."
All the bitter years unroll
  Before me, and the tale of wrong.
O mother, mother, did you know,
When you sang them long ago,
  They would bide with me so long?

THE JUSTICE OF MEN

The justice of men
Is naught;
With gold
It is to be sold
And bought;
And he that hath nor gold nor friend
Is sure of that lacking to be condemned
Of the justice of men.

The justice of men
I see;
The great,
Of their high estate,
Are free.
In every law there's a postern-gate
That opens but to the rich and great—
Oh, the justice of men!

The justice of men
Is vain;
How long,
O Lord, shall the wrong
Remain?
The cry of the weak goes up to Thee;
O Lord, of Thy mercy, make us free
Of the justice of men!

THE SPIRIT OF "McKENTYVILLE"

'Tis the Spirit that maketh alive, and never the Letter;
You may dot each "i" in the Law, and yet be debtor;
It's more than the "making good"—it's the making better.

You may cleanse yourself of your stain, of your streak of yellow;
But after you've helped yourself, will you give your fellow
A helping hand, a cheering word, and a smile that's mellow?

To think but the best of yourselves, as of men in the making;
Of the goal that lieth ahead; of the day that is breaking;
To smile and be cheerful still, though the heart be aching.

To let not the battle be lost for the lack of the trying—
Was there ever a battle was won by just moping and sighing?
'Tis only the brave and the steadfast in heart who'll take no denying.

To strive, with tireless hands and an iron will,
To fashion a future good from a by-gone ill—
Is not this the spirit of "McKentyville"?

THE DESIRED DOOR

There's golden doors of palaces,
  Great doors and high;
And there's the shining western door
  The sun leaves by.
Full many a splendid portal
  Opes to cathedral dome,
But my eyes are eager only
  For the little door of home.

Nor carven sill, nor lintel,
  Nor bronze leaves subtly swung
On hidden golden hinges
  And moved to music's tongue,
Can move me like the rude door,
  With clustered blooms above,
That frames for me at even'
  The bright face of my love.

TO THE BOY CHORISTERS
JUNE 6, 1920

Adown wood-lanes that the violet graces
  With perfect beauty we held most dear,
And fast o'er the burning desert spaces,
  Where the wild rose blooms in the spring o' the
    year,

Over the waves like wild horses rearing,
  Flashing manes in the sunlight tossed,
  We would go hunting, seeking, peering—
  Hunting that that we lightly lost.

And some do hear a bird-call
  From tangled greenery;
And some do hear the wind's call
  Racing from the sea.
And some, on swift wings homing—
  O days of long ago—
Do hear then in the gloaming
  A loved voice singing low,
"*But me and my true love will never meet again*
  On the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond."

O laddies, when you're grown men
  And walk upright and strong,
I pray you do remember then
  Your boy's rich gift of song;
And how, upon a day in June,
  You sang 'mid walls and bars,
Till we, by magic of your tune,
  Looked up and saw the stars.

MY CASTLE IN SPAIN

My castle in Spain is the heart of you;
Its walls are the beauty I loved and knew;
Your arms, your lips are its towers tall,
And its garrison is your kisses all.
The splendid banner that flies above
Is the wealth of your sun-bright hair, my love;
But your eyes are traitors that to me sold
My castle in Spain to have and hold.

My castle in Spain has golden keys,
Fashioned of olden memories;
Memories of old days so glad;
Memories of your love I had:
Of lips that yielded and arms that clung;
A voice that ever the lark outsung;
Of your April eyes and your tresses gold,
In my castle in Spain I have and hold.

UNFINISHED

The tapestry hangs on my wall,
  Hints at romance fair begun;
But hath no issue of it all—
  And would I knew young love had won.

Haply it limns a lady's day—
  Some hours of a crowded life—
I would not undertake to say
  If she were widow, maid, or wife.

There's slender train of incidents
  That might have chanced to any such;
Who kept—but not too strictly—Lents,
  And loved—but never overmuch.

The knight rides by the lady's bower—
  The jessed hawk balanced on his wrist;
And later, where the dogwoods flower—
  The hawk's prey all forgot—they kissed.

It might be in some princely joust,
  Or ordeal, or battle grim,
Like thunderbolts the knights are loosed—
  It might be for her weal or whim.

Methinks the lady blushed and glanced
  Aside; the barriers let fall—
It tells no more of what then chanced,
  The tapestry hangs on my wall.

THE MIRACLE MAN

"Let there be Light."
Is man's word of might.
Men harness them then wild waterfall;
Rear concrete buttress and granite wall,
That it dance no more in a giddy reel,

But lend its strength to the turning wheel.
A task is set that it may not scamp;
That the might of a thousand horses ramp—
Untamed as coursers of the Sun,
That in their harness leap and run—
Through every glittering, golden thread
Of the ever-widening web that's spread
And lies obedient to his hand—
Mightier than magician's wand
Is the hand of the blue-clad engineer—
Who hurls a luminous, flashing spear
Into the dark e'er the day be sped;
While yet the Door of the West is red
Of the sun's passing; over all,
City and hamlet, cot and hall,
A shining garment of light is flung—
Their ways with jewels thickly strung.
That dull street leading to the park,
Like flaming ribbon loops the dark;
The Babel towers that scale the skies
Stare with insolent, golden eyes
Across the darkling roofs below
Like giants at a pygmy show.
Prometheus of modern time,
Almost your miracle's divine!

THE WOMAN O'T

I have had two lovers—I,
That had eyes like April's sky;
And the cheek's damask that's gone
Once had put to blush the dawn.

Both kissed me—one stayed to wed;
Twenty-and-two years are sped;
And my heart enshrines to-day,
He that kissed and rode away.

EXCEPT THE LIGHT KEEP THE CITY

All its golden lamps alight,
The Avenue is gay to-night.

Where the city's restless tides
Flow between the shining guides.

Should those gleaming lamps go black,
Who could vision all the wrack?

See the terror, grim and stark,
That might walk there in the dark.

Haply beacons would be lit,
Such as we'd not have on it.

Haply lights would flower there,
Such as we would gladly spare.

All that far-flung line of lights,
Keep good watch for us of nights.

THAT "SADDEST WORD" APPLIES

(Written after reading Clarence Day, Jr.'s "This Simian World.")

I had but pounced upon a rat;
So young it was and sleekly fat,
I quivered all my length with joy,
And for a moment thought to toy
With it ere giving *coup de grace.*
(Should I or should I not release;
And if I should, would it increase
And yield yet richer harvest when
My time had come to catch again?)
And then I looked upon *her* face!

Fancy the purest Persian blood
Imposed on rich Angora's flood
And the result; and you have her.
Wrapped in such silken, snowy fur,
One might not tire of touching soft,
Till arching spine and tail aloft

Proclaimed surrender; and her eyes,
So golden, lambent, shot with dyes
Of emerald and *creme de menthe,*
Approved intruder on her haunt.

I thought no more of late-prized prey;
My claws relaxed—it fled away.
I purred soft question—she replied—
(And I'd a swift conceit; she sang,
And from those clustered stars that hang
From Heaven's battlements to hear,
One fell far-flashing down the sheer
Abyss, to die in vivid flame
Before her; so might one attain.)
And sudden I was by her side.

Plainly the languorous tail expressed
The flame enkindled in her breast—
Oh, curses on that morn dew-pearled
That woke me to this simian world!

WASHINGTON TO AMERICA

At your birth was counselled caution,
  Lest you make you enemies;
It was not for babes to venture
  Out upon such troubled seas.

It is well youth should be modest,
  And usurp not manly place;
But who would have manhood fearful
  To discover Duty's face?

Unto you hath much been given,
  Do you then expect to bask
In the sun of your importance
  And be free of manly task?

To both small and great of nations
  Hath a work been given to do;
Can you shirk that task appointed
  And to heritage be true?

To such service were you fashioned;
  To such end your fathers wrought;
Would you then make vain their labors,
  Have them give so much for naught?

Shall that flame your fathers kindled
  On your altars sink and die?
Are you fain to see extinguished,
  The torch that they lifted high?

First are you among the nations—
  Beautiful and tall and strong—
Trusted by the Little Peoples
  That you will not work them wrong.

Free of lust of wide dominion,
  Free of hatred, fear and greed;
Now is come your time of service;
  Now it is your hour to lead.

There are many who would follow,
  And you will but lead the van;
In earth's hour of utmost travail,
  It behooves you play the man.

And your fathers, and your mothers,
  Parents to an eagle brood,
Seeing strong wings flashing sunward,
  They shall know their work was good.

NOCTURNE

Golden the firefly's spark, half-quenched in dew;
Golden the stream of stars flows through the blue;
Plaintive the nightjar's call, wailing its mate;
O Philomela, and wherefore do you wait?
Milk-white your shoulders, dear; whiter your breast;
On such silken pillow a king's head might rest.
Sleep, then, all odorous of myrrh and musk,
My Rose of all the world, the dusk, the dusk!

"Last week it was a general come,
'N' stays all of a minute,
Explainin' t' me how he'll run
Th' Government when in it!

A colonel looked me up next day,
T' say that it's expected
I'll vote for him; of course—an' say,
I hope he ain't elected!

Some captains and lieutenants wrote,
Explainin' that th' war was won
Th' minute that they had my vote—
Just let them start another one!

It's just my luck that I ain't in,
Th' day that my old sarge' appears
And leaves word I should vote for him—
Not in eleven million years!

If I was in th' army yet
I'd draw ten days' K. P., or worse,
Because they ain't none goin' t' git
My vote, unless it may be my old nurse!

ART IS LONG

Since first Cleopatra's barge
Waited by the Cydnus' marge
For Antony, the poets tell—
Sometimes poorly, sometimes well—
Of a net that does not fail,
Spread in sight of any male,
To enmesh, and hold him fast
Now, as in the storied past.
Fashioned of such trickeries,
Make men do as women please.
Glance that soft caress implies,
Flashed from half-averted eyes;
Touch of hand and touch of lip
Lash like to Flagellant's whip;
Turn of dress or ornament
May be subtle message sent;
All's meant to be understood—
You might conquer and you would.
Cleopatra knew no more
Than the woman lives next door.

THE MOTHER OF INSPIRATION

There's no money for the baker,
Butcher, or walking-stick maker;
  I must write a villanelle.

There's my wife—and I can't tell
How she manages so well;
There's no money for the baker.

There's the baby—must not wake her,
Else I'll surely have to take her;
I must write a villanelle.

There's the landlord—he would sell,
Claiming rent collecting's—well,
There's no money for the baker.

There's the coveted home-acre
Out Hempstead way—waits a taker;
I *must* write a villanelle.

There's the useless cocktail shaker,
Speaking like alarum bell.
There's no money for the baker,
I must write a villanelle.

AT TWILIGHT

Day's death, and a dusky room, and a memory of you;
With two gold stars in the zenith lit, like your eyes peering through.
Never a breeze to stir the grass, and yet is wafted there

"Odor of spice and all that's nice," like to your scented hair.
Never a homeward droning bee, yet all about me runs,
Whisper of speech of each to each, like to the sound of drums.

THAT LITTLE FLOCK

There were twelve of a congregation:
One had gone for a walk,
And one tires so very easily;
One had been brought by his wife,
Who took her religion hardly;
And two were beginning lovers,
And one was spying upon them.
One had come for a nap—
He loved the rolling of syllables,
So like to the rain on the roof
That lulled him to sleep in childhood.
Two were there to strengthen
The minister's orthodoxy—
For them there was no sleeping.
And one was seeking warmth—
An usher watching him darkly.
And one took pains to exhibit
The latest Paris "creation."
And one old-fashioned creature
Had actually come to worship!
There were twelve of the congregation.

HEAR, O ISRAEL!

An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,
Is the master-call of greed;
The shibboleth of an olden god—
The cry of an outworn creed.
To exact a life for the life that's lost,
Will it make the balance true?
Rather the doubly weigh it down—
Will an old lamp purchase a new?

"NEVER TO SLEEP AGAIN"

That desert where once magic carpet plied,
That Shishak's hosts traversed—where Hagar cried;
Is rated now "a nasty bit o' road,"
Where oft the lorry driver damns his load.

A motor-launch slips coughing through the reeds,
It's pilot cursing all new-fangled "feeds"—
He'd just been left poor "second" in a race—
To tie at Semiramis' bathing place.

Where long the twin-humped Bactrian camels trode,
Hard on each other's heels, with costly load
Of silks and spices out of Samarcand;
The "steel horse" trails dark plumes across the sand.
Adown that air where rebellious afreet
Warred with jinnee yet loyal, swoop the fleet

War-birds, whose thunderbolts let slip,
Serve well to rivet fast the new-times grip.

FALSE DAWN

A memory of yesterday:
I rose betimes to greet the day—
The morrow was my wedding-morn,
When all my world would be reborn—
And from my casement looking out,
Saw all the darkness put to rout
Before the sun-god's majesty,
New-risen from the girdling sea.
And the white road across the moor
Was straight a Gateway of Romance—
My knight might ride with couchen lance.

Down that road of gold there came
A gypsy lad with face aflame
With the sun's gold—and all his hair;
And oh! right boldly did he stare,
Till eye met eye, and then I knew
In all the world was but we two;
And so had been since first we met
In some far day I'd not forget.
I know not was I slave or queen,
Nor cared I, knowing I had been
His true love in a day long past,
And we had met—too late—at last.
The morrow is my wedding-morn,
When all my world will be reborn.

END

[redacted]

DATE DUE

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